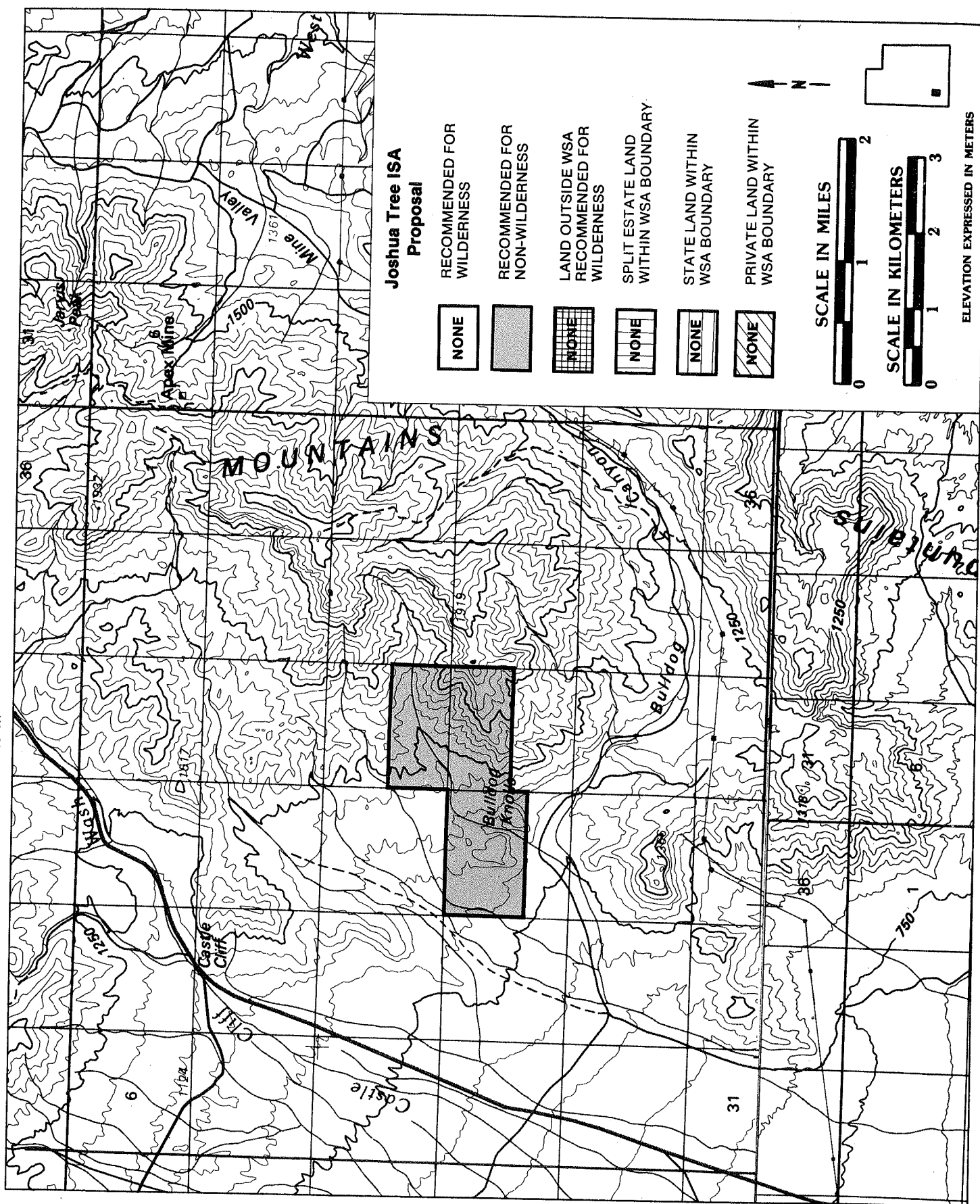


Joshua Tree

Instant Study Area

T. 43 S.



October 1991

JOSHUA TREE NATURAL AREA (NATURAL LANDMARK)

STATISTICAL SUMMARY
JOSHUA TREE NATURAL AREA (NATURAL LANDMARK)
WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH - CEDAR CITY DISTRICT

	Previously Designated Area	Contiguous Lands (if Any)	Total
<u>Acres with Wilderness Characteristics</u>	0	None	0
<u>Acres without Wilderness Characteristics</u>			
Recommended Against Designation	1,040	None	0
Total	1,040	None	0

Ownership in Study Area (April 14, 1980)

BLM	1,040 Acres
Forest Service	0 Acres
Private	0 Acres

RECOMMENDATION

JOSHUA TREE NATURAL AREA (NATURAL LANDMARK)

The Joshua Tree Natural Area (Natural Landmark) has been found to lack those wilderness characteristics described in the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964. The limited opportunity for solitude is not outstanding. No opportunity for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation is outstanding in quality. There is no diversity in the number of recreational activities possible. BLM recommends to the Secretary of the Interior that Congress find the Natural Area (Natural Landmark) nonsuitable for preservation as wilderness.

District Manager *M. J. Jensen* District Cedar City
Date 2/26/81
State Director *Don Stephens* State Utah
Date 4/9/81
Director /s/ Robert F. Burford
Date July 22, 1983

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RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

Results of Wilderness Characteristics Review: The Utah State Director has determined that the Joshua Tree Instant Study Area (ISA) possesses naturalness, but lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude, and for primitive and unconfined types of recreation. An Analysis of each wilderness characteristic follows.

Naturalness: The only evidence of man identified in the ISA is a small area of minerals exploration located on the southern boundary of the unit. This intrusion is apparently on the boundary and it is difficult to determine if the shafts are indeed within the ISA. The appearance of this intrusion is not substantially noticeable. It does not influence the naturalness of the area. With the exception of this possible intrusion, there is no evidence of man in the ISA and the area possesses the wilderness characteristic of naturalness.

Outstanding Opportunity for Solitude: It would be difficult to avoid sights, sounds, and evidence of other people in most of the ISA because of its small size, the openness of the desert shrub vegetative cover, and lack of topographic relief. Visitors could screen themselves from one another in the ridge area of Section 22. However, only approximately 160 acres would afford any opportunity for solitude in the ridge area. This limited opportunity would not be considered an outstanding opportunity for solitude.

Outstanding Opportunity for Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: Because of the small size of the ISA, opportunities for those types of primitive and unconfined recreation activities dependent upon a sustained period of participatory time are not present. For example, backpacking is not possible within the unit. Opportunities for nonmotorized and nondeveloped types of recreation activities such as hiking and horseback riding are limited because approximately one-fourth of the terrain in this small area cannot be ridden or hiked. The hiking and horseback riding opportunities are not of outstanding quality. The ISA does possess opportunities for a limited number of activities such as bird watching, rock climbing, and sightseeing for botanical features that are not dependent upon the geographical size of the area. The number of such activities is not considered sufficient to meet the diversity standard for outstanding opportunities specified in the Wilderness Inventory Handbook.

An analysis of the public comments on the Utah State Director's proposal that the Joshua Tree NA lacked wilderness characteristics indicates that none of the comments would justify changing the proposed determination of wilderness character. The Utah State Director's final

decision that the NA lacked wilderness character was announced in the May 5, 1980 Federal Register.

Economic and Social Impacts: A suitability or nonsuitability recommendation is required of the Secretary by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). Because the recommendation does not constitute a change in the status or administration of the area, it generates no economic or social impacts. The NA has been managed under the interim management stipulations of section 603(c) of the FLPMA and interim management will continue until Congress determines otherwise.

Analysis of Long-Term and Short-Term Effects of the Recommendation: The recommendation is that the Joshua Tree NA is nonsuitable for designation as wilderness. No lists of uses compatible and incompatible with the purposes of designation have been prepared. No long-term and short-term effects are associated with this recommendation.

Options Foregone if Recommendation is Adopted: If Congress does not add the Joshua Tree NA to the NWPS, the option of Wilderness Area status and any possible enabling legislative direction for the area would be lost.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Statement on Previous Designation: The Joshua Tree Natural Area (Natural Landmark) was designated on June 16, 1970 by the Utah State Director by virtue of authority vested in the Secretary of the Interior under the Classification and Multiple Use Act of September 19, 1964 and R.S. 2478 (43 U.S.C. 120), and pursuant to the provisions of 43 CFR Subpart 1727.

Significant Resource Data: The significant resource in the Joshua Tree NA is the Joshua Tree vegetation association. This vegetative association is described by Wauer in his evaluation of the Joshua Tree NA for its eligibility for registered Natural Landmark designated. (Quoted verbatim)

The . . . "Natural Area" is but a small part of several thousand acres of Joshua Tree Forest. The lower fringe of Joshua Trees begin at approximately 2,000 feet elevation along the south slope of the Beaver Dam Mountains where the ridges drop into the low desert scrub environment of Beaver Dam Wash. The forest intergrades with the pinyon-

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juniper association along the upper slopes at an elevation of about 5,500 feet, above which the pinyon-juniper is dominant. Fingers of Joshua Trees extend along the wash and below the pinyon-juniper woodland for about 18 miles.

It is the only Joshua Tree Forest in Utah and the northernmost stand of tree yuccas in the United States, except for insignificant stands that occur north to central Nevada in the vicinity of Tonopah and along the slopes of the Pahrnagat Mountains.

Of major importance is the Joshua Tree Association itself, of which Joshua Tree (*Yucca breviflora*) is dominant. Other plants that reach the northern edge of their range here include the Utah Agave (*Agave utahensis*), Barrel Cactus (*Echinocactus wislizenii*), and Cottontop Cactus (*Echinocactus polycephalus*). The latter three species prefer the limestone outcrops that occur throughout the Beaver Dam Mountains.

The general vegetation along the southwestern bajada is predominantly of Mohave Desert affinity. Common species include *Yucca baccata*, Blackbrush, Creosotebush, *Ephedra nevadensis*, Cholla, Goldenhead (*Acamptopappus spaerocephalus*), Wolfberry, Burrobrush, and Bursage. From the standpoint of annual forbs, Filaree and Dwarf milkvetch are by far the most abundant. The larger washes usually are well lined with Desert Almond (*Prunus fasciculata*) and Honey Mesquite.

The presence of the Joshua Tree Association is principally due to ideal edaphic conditions formed by well drained sands and gravels that form coarse detrital soils. Examination of the unconsolidated alluvium in the forest area indicates that the ancient crystalline basement to the northwest is the local source terrain. Paleozoic carbonate rocks are also present in the loose detritus. While in the uppermost slopes of the Joshua Tree Forest a thrust plane crops out northwest-southeast and dips about 25 degrees west.

The age of the thrusting may be early to mid-Tertiary before basin and range faulting began. Older alluvium crops out from beneath the most recent alluvial sediments in the bedrock slopes of the bajada. These coarse loosely consolidated gravels probably are Pleistocene and like the overlaying alluvium of more recent age, were derived from erosion of the Beaver Dam Mountains to the north and east. About twenty huge slabs of Mississippian limestone rest on gravels of this older alluvium.

The whole of the association is conducive to a good variety of animal life; again mostly of the Mohave Desert affinity. Of real significance are the number of animals that reach the northern edge of their range at this particular location. Reptiles include the Desert Tortoise, desert Iguana, and Gila Monster. Both the Cactus Wren and Scott's Oriole may be included in this group as is the Kit Fox. (Roland Wauer, August 1966, Evaluation of Joshua Tree Natural Area, Washington County, Utah, for eligibility for Registered Natural Landmark Designation.)

This vegetative association is also described by Atwood. (Quoted verbatim)

One of the primary values is that the area represents the northern most extension for several of its components, such as, wild Rue (*Thamnosna montana*), Barrel Cactus (*Ferocactus lecontri*), Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), Beaver Dam crypantha (*Crypantha virginensis*), Utah Agave (*Agave utahensis*) and Cliff penstemon (*Penstemon petiolatus*). The latter two species are threatened or endangered. The area has been of interest to many scientists and university groups. Dr. C.C. Parry visited the area in 1874. After Dr. Parry's visit many other important botanists were attracted to the area. Dr. Edward Palmer came in 1877, M.E. Jones in 1880, Merriman and Bailey (Death Valley expedition) traveled to the region in 1891 and many others followed. University groups from all the western states have and continue to make botanical and zoological excursions to the Beaver Dam slopes. In addition, 50 percent of the plant species found here occur only in the Lower Sonoran zone. Portions of the area are transitional between the lower and upper Sonoran zones. This feature is unique to the region and is of great scientific value . . . A primary concern, which I have, is the area that has been designated. It does not represent the typical type in southwestern Utah. There are areas west of the highway which could serve better as research natural areas. (Duane Atwood, August 20, 1976, Memorandum to Morgan Jensen, "Joshua Tree Natural Area".)

(In the reports quoted above it is recognized that there are differences in the spelling and plant names used.)

Both of the foregoing reports conclude that the significant resource value of the NA(NL) is that the area represents one of the northern most extensions of the Joshua Tree vegetative association. The Atwood

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citation, however, argues that the most representative and significant location is west of the NL area identified in the National Park Service eligibility report.

Summary of Public Participation:

Description of Process: An intensive inventory for the Joshua Tree NA was completed by the Cedar City District Office wilderness staff on November 23, 1979. No public requests for field participation in the inventory were received.

The Utah State Director's proposed decision on wilderness characteristics was announced in the January 16, 1980 Federal Register (pp. 3114-3115) and a 30-day public comment period initiated from January 16, 1980 to February 15, 1980. The Utah State Office distributed a summary narrative, map, and news release to the public on January 17, 1980.

An analysis of these comments by the Cedar City District indicated that none of the comments justified a change in the proposed decision. On April 4, 1980 the Cedar City District Manager recommended to the Utah State Director that the final decision on the Joshua Tree ISA be that the ISA lacks wilderness characteristics.

Summary of Analysis of Comments: Three of the letters referred to all of the ISA units (Joshua Tree, Link Flat, Book Cliff, and Devil's Garden). One letter states that:

The criteria by which the BLM determines wilderness status is oftentimes excessively strict, particularly where the 5,000-acre requirement is concerned. Ecosystems do not need 5,000-acres to be sustained.

This comment was not considered because by policy ecosystem representation is not a wilderness characteristic and because by law there is no 5,000-acres requirement for ISAs. The other two letters stated that:

Upon review of your comments with respect to these areas and the accompanying plats, please be advised that we concur with your proposed decisions that none of these ISAs possess wilderness characteristics.

and:

I would have to agree wholeheartedly on the decisions to exclude all four areas from wilderness consideration based on the description as presented in the January 17th publication.

The remaining three letters disagree with the State Director's proposed decision on the Joshua Tree ISA. One letter states that:

I urge the BLM to recommend wilderness protection for the Joshua Tree I.S.A. despite its size and lack of outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation. The concept of solitude is a state of mind which is different with each individual and is not limited by an area's size. Likewise, the opportunity for primitive, unconfined recreation should be considered from the view that different persons can appreciate an area's naturalness in varying degrees. Joshua Tree I.S.A. should not be penalized because the climate dictates an open desert shrub vegetation, but rather it should be protected because of its naturalness and unique value as part of the Wilderness System.

This comment agrees that the ISA lacks outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and disagrees with the Wilderness Inventory Handbook procedures for evaluating these characteristics. One letter made an extensive comment about the Joshua Tree decision. The entire comment is printed below.

Now to your latest round of elimination: Joshua Tree Instant Study Area. One of your reasons to eliminate this study area is that another study area (Starvation Point) has Joshua Trees in a more representative area and that area is being considered for wilderness. This is a hellava excuse to drop a Study Area. We have no assurance for 10 years or more that a Joshua Tree habitat type will even be included in a wilderness area. And next year you will probably drop the Starvation Point because IPP will have a transmission line visible from one point within the wilderness area. Second, when one habitat integrates with a second habitat, it is even more interesting biologically than an uniform habitat. This makes it a different wilderness area than an uniform habitat. Then you mention small size and closeness of human impacts. A thousand acres is much too large for solitude feelings of outstanding nature. One only needs a few acres for such feelings as long as a thousand acres are pro-

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tected. Then you say that one-fourth of the terrain in this small area cannot be ridden or hiked. This sounds very wild. Most of the Wind Rivers cannot be ridden. It seems that the BLM is stacking the deck with a bunch of lame reasoning to prevent lands from becoming wilderness study areas. The BLM seems to have rather corrupt values in its determination of naturalness, opportunity for solitude, and opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

Many of the assumptions in this comment are erroneous. The Starvation Point WSA was described in the description section of the ISA narrative. The wilderness characteristics determination for the Joshua Tree ISA did not consider the presence of the Starvation Point WSA. The reference to "habitat integration" was also made in the description section and was not considered in the analyses of wilderness characteristics. The comment states that "a thousand acres is much too large for solitude feelings of outstanding nature." The BLM proposal, however, states that it would be difficult to avoid the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people in most of the ISA because of its small size, the openness of the desert shrub vegetative cover, and the lack of topographic relief. The comment states that because one-fourth of the terrain cannot be ridden or hiked, the area is "very wild." The BLM proposal considered the amount of hiking or riding opportunity to determine if these activities were of individually outstanding quality. The proposal states that the area does possess the naturalness ("wild"?) characteristic.

The final comment disagrees with the findings concerning outstanding solitude and outstanding primitive recreation in the ISA. The comment is printed below.

Our disagreement with your decision on the Joshua Tree ISA is based upon several factors. In your report you stated, "It would be difficult to avoid sights, sounds, and evidence of other people in most of the ISA because of its small size, the openness of the desert shrub vegetation, and lack of topographic relief". In the same paragraph you indicated that 160 acres of the area could afford solitude. The Organic Act Directive (OAD) No. 78-61 Chg. 3 states "It is erroneous to assume that simply because a unit or portion of a unit is flat, and/or unvegetated, it automatically lacks an outstanding opportunity for solitude". It also states: "... It must be documented that there is nei-

ther an outstanding opportunity for solitude not for primitive and unconfined recreation". The whole area is not required to provide outstanding opportunities in order to meet this criteria. You have indicated that 160 acres of this unit do not have opportunities for solitude and have defined the rest as not having like qualities because the unit is, "... small size, the openness of the desert vegetation cover, and lack of topographic relief". In your report you indicated that the lowest elevation in the unit is 3,360 feet and the highest is 5,720 feet. This gives this unit a topographic relief of 2,400 feet which is definitely not lacking in topographic relief.

Regarding your comments on the outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation, you indicated that while the area does have certain recreational opportunities, "the number of such activities is not considered sufficient to meet the diversity standard set for outstanding opportunities specified in the Wilderness Inventory Handbook". We consider opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, rock climbing, and sightseeing for botanical features to represent sufficient diversity.

In conclusion, we feel you need to further document and clarify in each case why these units were eliminated from further wilderness consideration. . . . In the Joshua Tree area you need to ensure that the rationale is consistent with inventory policy and to fully document the reasons why this area does not meet the Wilderness Act 2(c) criteria.

The BLM proposal states that outstanding opportunities for solitude are lacking throughout the area. The comment erroneously assumes that the evaluation is in violation of OAD 78-61 because a portion of the area contains outstanding opportunities. The BLM proposal also states some opportunity for solitude is offered by topographic screening in the limited area where topographic relief is found.

The BLM proposal states that three activities (bird watching, rock climbing, sightseeing for botanical features) is not a sufficient number of activities to satisfy the Blue Book diversity standard. The BLM proposal

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indicates that hiking and riding opportunities are inferior because of the small area available. It was assumed that hiking and riding are possible on any inventory unit in the BLM and that these particular activities could not contribute to the variety of activities available in any unit.

A copy of each of these comments is in the Cedar City District's Permanent Documentation File.

Cultural Resource Clearance: On March 27, 1981, Dr. Melvin T. Smith, Utah State Historic Preservation Officer, was contacted by letter and informed of the nonsuitability for preservation recommendation for the Joshua Tree ISA.